



Climate Change and Gender in Pakistan: Girls' participation in Climate Action and COP-28 Through 'COP in my City Events'

SUMMARY

UNICEF Pakistan, in partnership with the Ministry of Climate Change and other organizations, conducted the third annual "COP in My City" initiative in major Pakistani cities as an inter-agency initiative. This project encouraged active youth involvement, with a particular emphasis on girls, in climate action and the selection of a youth delegation for COP-28, with the theme of "Bringing COP to your City." Youth delegates, chosen through essay submissions, received webinars and briefings to prepare for COP-28. Following thematic debates, winners proceeded to a "Grand Finale" in Islamabad, with girls supported in creating a "Pink District Climate Status Report" for District Governments. Ten delegates were chosen for COP-28, endorsed by the government of Pakistan. The initiative aimed to expand to more cities for grassroots youth representation in COP-29, emphasizing the pivotal role of young people, especially girls, in climate discussions and offering a scalable model for similar efforts globally.

Introduction

Climate change is not gender neutral, rather it amplifies already existing gender inequalities with the most marginalized communities experiencing the greatest impacts. For example:

- Women in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change because they are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. Women charged with securing water, food and fuel for cooking and heating face the greatest challenges. Due to gendered power dynamics, women experience unequal access to resources and decision-making processes, with limited mobility, particularly in rural areas.
- Girls' household responsibilities and distance to school in increasingly harsh conditions challenges their access to learning. The lack of water and sanitation services may affect girls and adolescent girls' reproductive health, with a potential negative impact on their psychosocial and well-being.
- In some contexts, risks associated with climate change exacerbate possibility of gender-based violence, including child marriage which is reported as a negative coping mechanism due to climate change induced economic insecurity. Indeed, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, notes that gender-based violence is prevalent where there is both conflict and risk of experiencing extreme weather events, for example in Yemen.
- Climate change may also increase food insecurity thereby contributing to high anaemia rates for adolescent girls.
- A global gender gap in earnings and productivity persists across all forms of economic activity; women make between 30 percent and 80 percent of male annual income. Restricting job opportunities for

women has been costing the region approximately \$44 billion a year.

Country Context

The cumulative effects of climate change directly impact the economy, costing the country an estimated USD 38 billion annually (WB and ADB 2021). If this trend continues, it will reverse human development gains made over the last decade. Already, in 2020 Pakistan ranked 154 out of 189 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index, down two places from 152 the previous year. Pakistan recognizes that climate change affects everyone differently and that narrowing the gender gap is essential to building climate preparedness and resilience for all. If Pakistan is to tackle the climate challenges that lie ahead, it cannot do so without all stakeholders' full and equal participation, especially its youth which comprise of almost 60 per cent of its population.

Realizing the huge potential of young people's contribution to shape and influence climate discussions, UNICEF Pakistan and the Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Climate Change in Pakistan, UNDP and UN-Women, kicked off eight 'COP in My City' events in major cities of Pakistan, for promoting active involvement of youth in climate action, majority of which are girls. The aim of this initiative was to select potential and talented youth delegation of Pakistan to participate in COP-28, to influence global debates around climate change and its impact. This is the documentation of the experience of the third year of this initiative, and it follows a step-by-step approach. The main theme of the event was, 'Everyone cannot participate in COP, so we bring COP to your City', thereby making climate agenda everyone's business and concern.

Youth delegates from Universities and Colleges registered for 'COP in My City' events in their cities and wrote an essay to show their motivation and contributions in climate action and were

graded before an invitation was sent to the selected candidates. Girls were given extra opportunities to ensure that they are the majority in the total number of registered delegates. Four webinars were conducted with registered youth to build their capacity and understanding about upcoming COP-28.

Later, during the 'COP in My City' events, they were divided into three groups for thematic debates on key topics of COP 28, and each group was further divided & assigned to act as 'Global North' and 'Global South'. The topics covered, 1. Loss and Damage, 2. De-Carbonization; and 3. Just Transition, emphasising how youth could contribute to these emerging issues globally.

During debates, each delegate was assessed against a criterion. The final assessment of delegates was reviewed by a group of independent judges discussing the title, 'What I will do if I am selected to participate in COP'. Based on the final assessments, winners were given certificates and invited in the 'Grand Finale' in Islamabad. The winning girl delegates were provided technical support and resources to develop a 'Pink District Climate Status Report' and facilitated to present it to the District Governments, who reported on the same indicators to federal government through 'Clean Green Pakistan Index' Programme. The report prepared by young women helps the district level government officials to reflect on their draft submissions from a girl's perspective.

After a similar pattern of assessments in 'The Grand Finale', 10 delegates were selected to participate in COP-28 as youth delegation of Pakistan-endorsed by the government of Pakistan, with support from UNICEF and other partners. Two events in Islamabad and Peshawar took place in 2023 and 'COP in My City' event is expected to be expanded and celebrated in all cities of Pakistan to get more grass root youth-climate representation in COP-29.

BOX 1:

QUOTE FROM A FEMALE PARTICIPANT

Mahnour Rashid, a graduate in International Relations from the National Defence University, Islamabad said:

“Climate Change is a global issue which has had devastating impacts on Pakistan as we saw during 2022 floods in Pakistan, it left many issues, food insecurity, water and health insecurity and specially has adverse effects on vulnerable groups including children and youth, so we have gathered here to ask for climate justice that is served right now”.

Figure 1: Kickoff of ‘COP in My City’



Source: https://x.com/UNICEF_Pakistan

The aim is also to make the youth sensible to climate actions and how each one of them could be a change agent to influence their families and communities in this global drive to tackle climate impact.

Results

The key results were:

- Girls were encouraged to register and ensured greater girl representation and participation in COP-28 processes.
- A total of 1,551 youth participated, of which girls were positively discriminated to participate from 44 per cent to 55 per cent during shortlisting of candidates.
- Involvement of young people increased in district level decision making processes.
- The process enabled UNICEF Pakistan Country Office in collaboration with other UN agencies to support a delegation of ten young people from across Pakistan to participate in the COP28 held in Dubai.
- The young delegates were part of the official delegation that provided them huge opportunity for young climate advocates to learn, voice their concerns over climate policy, build alliance, expand partnerships and networks. The representatives to COP-28 served as change agents and youth

BOX 2:

QUOTE FROM KAMRAN NAEEM (WASH SPECIALIST, UNICEF PAKISTAN)

“As a focal person of ‘COP in My City’ event from UNICEF Pakistan, I feel a sense of immense accomplishment and success in involving youth in the COP-28 process because by the last event ‘Grand Finale’ took place, the finalist young people were taking decisions and proposing solutions like real statespersons. When we tested their decisions on a simulation software, there was a huge impact on emissions reduction and universal temperature control. That reassured us that young people have answer to questions that we are asking today, and they can take control of their future better”.

ambassadors to voice youth concerns and challenges in national and district level discussions and decision making forums.

Lessons learnt

The key lessons learnt related to youth and government engagement and leadership:

- Youth engagement in COP processes and debates on topics of upcoming COP is extremely beneficial for achieving their meaningful participation in global COP.
- Government lead 'COP in my City' event was seen as more legitimate and authentic youth engagement in climate action activity by the participants.
- Such an event contributed to youth empowerment in topics that affects them directly and to raise their voices for climate justice.
- The event paved the way for young people to feel heard and be part of the global solution to climate action, locally.

Next steps

The next steps are for young people to bring back the learnings and deliberations from the Global COP 28 and be part of the next 'COP in my City events' in all major cities of Pakistan before COP-29. This will help build a chain of young successors who can pass on the baton of policy decisions and practical actions to combat climate change impact in their local context and environment.

Scaling up Climate Resilient WASH services

COP is a global annual event in which UNICEF supports children and young people's participation because Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crises. All COs can adopt this step-by-step approach and involve youth in 'COP in My City' events in major

cities of their country. PCO will be happy to share their experience with other COs to plan this for COP-29 in 2024.

Conclusion

COP28 and COY offers an opportunity for intentional participation by girls, adolescent girls and young women in climate decision making.

It is an imperative that adequate resources and technical assistance to empower young people and ensure their voices are heard. 'COP in My City' has become a popular concept to identify leadership among young peoples of Pakistan for representation in global COP while the process of selecting empowers a large number of young people participating in different district level events.

References

Advocacy brief: Climate Change: Impact on Adolescent Girls United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Karama, October 2023) GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC Policy Brief (Overview of linkages between gender and climate change.

Photo Credits

© UNICEF/UN0701815/Zaidi

About the Authors

Susan Kendall, Gender and WASH consultant; Kamran Naeem, WASH Specialist; Kiran Qazi, WASH Officer (KM&Reporting), UNICEF Pakistan and Anu Paudyal Gautam, Knowledge Management Specialist, HQ

About the Series

UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) country teams work inclusively with governments, civil society partners and donors, to improve WASH services for children and adolescents, and the families and caregivers who support them. UNICEF works in over 100 countries worldwide to improve water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices. This publication is part of the UNICEF WASH Learning Series, designed to contribute to knowledge of good practice across UNICEF's WASH programming. In this series:

Discussion Papers explore the significance of new and emerging topics with limited evidence or understanding, and the options for action and further exploration.

Fact Sheets summarize the most important knowledge on a topic in few pages in the form of graphics, tables and bullet points, serving as a briefing for staff on a topical issue.

Field Notes share innovations in UNICEF's WASH programming, detailing its experiences implementing these innovations in the field.

Guidelines describe a specific methodology for WASH programming, research or evaluation, drawing on substantive evidence, and based on UNICEF's and partners' experiences in the field.

Reference Guides present systematic reviews on topics with a developed evidence base or they compile different case studies to indicate the range of experience associated with a specific topic.

Technical Papers present the result of more in-depth research and evaluations, advancing WASH knowledge and theory of change on a key topic.

WASH Diaries explore the personal dimensions of users of WASH services, and remind us why a good standard of water, sanitation and hygiene is important for all to enjoy. Through personal reflections, this series also offers an opportunity for tapping into the rich reservoir of tacit knowledge of UNICEF's WASH staff in bringing results for children.

WASH Results show with solid evidence how UNICEF is achieving the goals outlined in Country Programme Documents, Regional Organizational Management Plans, and the Global Strategic Plan or WASH Strategy, and contributes to our understanding of the WASH theory of change or theory of action.

COVID-19 WASH Responses compile lessons learned on UNICEF's COVID-19 response and how to ensure continuity of WASH services and supplies during and after the pandemic.

Readers are encouraged to quote from this publication but UNICEF requests due acknowledgement. You can learn more about UNICEF's work on WASH here:

<https://www.unicef.org/wash/>

www.unicef.org/wash

© United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

The statements in this publication are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF.

United Nations Children's Fund
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

For more information, please contact: WASH@unicef.org

Document No: WASH/Error! Reference source not found.